

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 FEA-02 INT-08 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 SCI-06 COME-00

OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIEP-02 DRC-01 /123 W
----- 094685

R 071815Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9567

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY 5563

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 1923

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, IN

SUBJ: ENERGY: JOINT SECRETARY A.P. VERMA

REF: A) STATE 023069; B) NEW DELHI 1861

1. RUMOR CITED IN PARA 3, REF A, HAS BEGUN TO MAKE
ROUNDS OF GOI CIRCLES, BUT CURRENT DELHI VERSION WOULD NOT
SET BACK NEGOTIATING MOMENTUM OF GOI/ESSO PARTICI-
PATION AGREEMENT. GOI/ESSO PLANS REMAIN FIRM, TO SIGN
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FEBRUARY 7 AND FORMAL
PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT FEBRUARY 12 (REF B).

2. A NORMALLY RELIABLE SOURCE CLOSE TO PETROLEUM
MINISTRY AND GOI CABINET OFFICIALS INFORMED MINATT
SWEETWOOD FEBRUARY 6 THAT PETROLEUM MINISTRY JOINT
SECRETARY A.P. VERMA MAY BE APPOINTED TO NEW ASSIGNMENT
"LATER THIS YEAR" AS REGIONAL COORDINATOR FOR CRUDE OIL
AND PETROLEUM PRODUCT IMPORTS AND TRADE. AS PETROLEUM
MINISTRY'S MOST EXPERIENCED NEGOTIATOR AND TRADER OF CRUDE
OIL, VERMA REPORTEDLY IS TO BE GIVEN AMBASSADORIAL RANK
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(AND THUS FULL DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY AS REQUIRED)

AND WILL HEAD UP NEW FIELD OFFICE TO BE LOCATED CON-
VENIENTLY IN THE PERSIAN GULF AREA (E.G., KUWAIT, BAHRAIN,
SAUDI ARABIA, OR ELSEWHERE).

3. DURING MEETING EARLY THIS WEEK, VERMAN INFORMED SOURCE
THAT THE GOI IS MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO FINALIZE NEW GOI-
ESSO AGREEMENT BEFORE PARLIAMENT RECONVENES FEBRUARY 18,
"AS NORMALLY-EXPEDIENT MEANS OF HANDLING MATTERS OF THIS
TYPE." (THIS MAY EXPLAIN GOI REASON FOR REDUCTION OF
INTERVAL FROM SIX WEEKS TO A FEW DAYS BETWEEN SIGNINGS
OF MEMORANDUM AND FINAL AGREEMENT -- REF B). REPORTEDLY
VERMA THEN NOTED THAT, AFTER ESSO PARTICIPATION AGREE-
MENT HAD BEEN REACHED AND AFTER ON-GOING PARTICIPATION
DISCUSSIONS WITH BURMAH OIL COMPANY HAD PROGRESSED TO
AGREEMENT STAGE, HE SOULD TAKE "POSSIBLY TWO-MONTH
MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE" (VERMA IS SAID TO HAVE HIGH BLOOD
PRESSURE AND IS UNDERSTOOD TO BE UNDER CONSTANT
MEDICATION FOR THIS PROBLEM). VERMA NEITHER CONFIRMED
NOR DENIED REPORT SOURCE CLAIMED HE HAD HEARD TO EFFECT
THAT MEDICAL LEAVE WOULD PRECEDE TRANSFER TO NEW
POSITION.

4. OUR INFORMATION ON VERMA'S POSSIBLE TRANSFER IS
PRESENTLY UNCONFIRMED, AND IN PART MAY HAVE BEEN IN-
CORRECTLY REPORTED BY SOURCE. PLEASE, THEREFORE, DO
NOT PASS FOREGOING TO PRIVATE OIL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES,
OR TO OTHER CONTACTS OUTSIDE USG. DEPARTMENT MAY,
HOWEVER, WISH TO TELL BIRKHEAD THAT IMMINENT VERMA
DEPARTURE UNLIKELY AND THAT ESSO NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE
UNAFFECTED.
SCHNEIDER

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